

The University of Chicago

EARLY METHODISM IN UPPER
CANADA

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVINITY SCHOOL IN
CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR
OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF CHURCH HISTORY

1932

By
STAR FLOYD MAINE

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CHAPTER II
METHODISM AND POLITICS
IN UPPER CANADA

The story of Upper Canada well exemplifies the truth, not appreciated as a rule by otherwise discriminating historians, that religion and life cannot be successfully separated. Pioneer life, political rivalries, educational aspirations, social ideals and expressions are shot through with the policies, the fervor, the rivalries and the prejudices of such religious bodies as the Anglicans and the Methodists. Upper Canada was not founded as were so many of the States of the Union, by religious zealots. None the less, organized religion has played its part in the life of the province. An examination of the early history of the Methodist Church in Upper Canada reveals not simply the religious history of a group but the powerful social and political influence of an important segment of society. As in their struggle for religious liberty in the sixteenth century the Huguenots of France were driven to become an imperium in imperio, so the Methodists of Upper Canada in the nineteenth century seeking civil and religious liberty were impelled to become, almost unconsciously, an active political force.

METHODISM'S AMERICAN ORIGIN

It is true that by referring to Tuffey and Neal, Methodism in Upper Canada may claim British ancestry, but it is equally as true that the first Methodist preacher to appear was William Losee of the New York Conference which fostered and cared for the little Canadian church till 1810 when the Genesee Conference was formed, and as a part of this, the Canadian church remained till the forma-

tion of a Canadian conference in 1824. Thus for a third of a century the roots of Ontario Methodism were attached to the soil of a country whose government showed by two wars, deep animosity toward things British. Because of this ancestry and relationship the Methodists of Upper Canada long had to bear the stigma of disloyalty and the charges of Republicanism which were adroitly used by its enemies.¹ To meet the charges important changes in organization were made which led to momentous results.

Had Methodism remained quiescent and subservient to the will of the governmental authorities, its history might have been uneventful. Its growth, however, was phenomenal and its spirit aggressive. Finding itself with certain other non-conformist groups, resting under severe disabilities, Methodism determined to struggle rather than submit tamely. In acquiring its rights it took from the privileges of others and so aroused powerful opposition.

The Constitutional Act under which Upper Canada was governed was ambiguous concerning church matters simply setting aside one-seventh of the province for the support of a Protestant clergy. The governor also had the right to erect "parsonages and rectories according to the established Church of England". It is reasonable to assume that the British government was endeavoring to establish

¹ Certain incidents occurred which might be used in support of these views. The conference of 1795 ordered a day of thanksgiving (for Canada as well as the United States) and among the reasons cited were "that we have such good constitutions formed for the respective states,---for the admirable revolution, obtained and established at so small a price of blood and treasure. (Minutes of Conference, 1795, quoted by Geo.F.Playter, Hist. of Methodism in Canada, p. 50.) While the Canadians could likely concur most heartily in most of the reasons for thankfulness it is doubtful if "the admirable revolution" and the forms of government referred to, brought pleasant memories or an attitude of thanksgiving to the Loyalists and ex-soldiers. Still, such a proclamation, even if not concurred in, might arouse suspicion. Thus Methodism in Upper Canada faced a stigma not found in the United States or England.

a state church in Upper Canada, and that the Church of England, but under the guise of ambiguity was retaining a mode of withdrawal if that were necessary. Simcoe's interpretation of the Act, the early appointment of an Anglican bishop in Canada and the exclusive right of the Episcopal clergy to solemnize marriage all support this view. While the Anglican Church was accorded special privilege some other denominations were denied the right to hold land for chapels, parsonages and burial grounds, and their clergy might not solemnize matrimony.

The war of 1812 created the first test of the dual loyalty of Upper Canadian Methodists. The Genesee Conference of 1812 was to convene at Warner's Meeting House in Upper Canada, but five weeks before its meeting the United States government had declared war. The American preachers were unable to come to Canada but it is probable that Henry Ryan the presiding elder gathered the itinerants in the country to the meeting place and allocated them to their fields, continuing such Canadian conferences during the war.¹

THE INFLUENCE OF THE WAR OF 1812 ON METHODISM

Methodist laymen when ordered to take their places in the ranks of the militia responded with an alacrity equal to that of any other group. As the membership in the Methodist societies in Upper Canada would not exceed three thousand at the outbreak of the war, Methodist actions did not attract attention. Even when American-born they proved generally loyal to the country of their adoption. One such, Thomas Harmon, an exhorter, after hesitation because of conscientious scruples threw himself into the struggle gaining the reputation of one who "prayed like a saint and fought

¹ John Carroll, Case and His Cotemporaries, I, 259, 288. (Toronto: 1867-1874.)

like a devil."¹ Any distinctive contribution Methodism as such had to make was in the lessening of the harshness of war, for while Methodists of both nationalities fought the "enemy", when they found them to be Methodists the spirit of fraternity rose superior to bitterness. Case visited the prisoners and the wounded after the battle of Sackett's Harbour and was able to relieve some with money raised at a neighbouring camp meeting. Itinerants with contacts on both sides of the international boundary found it possible to render excellent service to the distressed and wounded.² On the Vermont-Canadian line the American Methodists held a quarterly meeting to accommodate their Canadian brethren who had been debarred from religious services, so the so-called enemies, linked in the bonds of religious brotherhood formed one great congregation, divided only by an invisible boundary which each national group recognised.³

Two obvious results emanated from the war. It was undoubtedly one of the factors hastening the creation of an independent Methodist Church in Canada. The other result was the appearance of the British Wesleyans in Upper Canada. These representatives of British Methodism were invited to Quebec in 1814 because of the war and later they extended their labours to Upper Canada. With the re-establishment of the jurisdiction of the American conference following the Treaty of Ghent (1814), friction developed. While the Wesleyans were advised by their missionary committee to avoid invading societies established by the American conference,

¹ The developing antipathy between Methodists and Anglicans is seen in a wartime incident. Rev. Dr. Strachan, Anglican clergyman of York published an address to the soldiers. One commanding officer had his men assembled and invited Harmon to read the address. Later when a Methodist minister inquired from him "Was there any religion in the address?" he replied "Not much, but I tried to read a little into it as I went along." Carroll, Case, and His Cotemporaries, Vol. I, pp. 298-99.

² Ibid. p. 320.

³ Carroll, Case and His Cotemporaries, Vol. I, p. 279.

they were inevitably the aggressors. They professed loyalties supposedly lacking in their rivals and carried the spirit of eighteenth century English officialdom. In this manner they appealed usually to the more pretentious elements in the towns and in those border districts which had suffered chiefly during the war. The representatives of the American conference retained their hold upon the scattered settlers and those farther from the border. The animus of the Methodist Episcopal preachers was revealed to Rev. Richard Pope, a British missionary. When near St. Catherines he visited a service led by the picturesque George Ferguson of the Methodist Episcopal church. On Pope's entrance Ferguson gave out the hymn:

Jesus shepherd of the flock
To Thee for help we fly.
The little flock in safety keep
For O! the wolf is nigh.

With great gusto Ferguson entered upon the second verse:

He comes with hellish malice full
To scatter, tear and slay, etc. etc.

Pope in return spoke of Ferguson and his presiding elder Ryan as Methodist brothers from the United States, whereas both were British subjects, Ryan by naturalization while Ferguson was a discharged British soldier.¹ The Methodist Episcopal authorities endeavoured to check the inroads of the British societies by stationing Englishmen in centres where rivalry existed. Such an unfortunate struggle continued till 1820 when by agreement between the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Wesleyan Missionary Society, the British missionaries withdrew from Upper Canada while the Methodist Episcopal Church reciprocated in Lower Canada. Kingston was treated as an exception, so the rivalry continued on a smaller scale.

¹ Carroll, Case and His Contemporaries, Vol. II, pp. 211 and 213.

The same year in which this agreement was made (1820) the Genesee Conference met at Lundy's Lane in Upper Canada, the site of one of the bloody battles of the war. Here knelt together to receive ordination, men who six years before had fought over the same ground and along the frontier in opposing armies. While the Methodists might so exemplify the Christian spirit, their American associations became an excuse for opposition. The Rev. Fitch Reed, pastor at York 1820-22 wrote, "A general prejudice existed against the society, no doubt because of their simple-hearted, earnest piety and the obscurity of their social position; but ostensibly because they were subject to a foreign ecclesiastical jurisdiction and their ministers mostly foreigners. This prejudice indeed extended to all our societies in the province and our ministers and people suffered many annoyances by reason of this foreign element."¹

CONTROVERSY AND A CANADIAN CONFERENCE

This same anti-American spirit was utilized as a cloak for other purposes, within as well as without the Methodist organization. An important problem to be dealt with at the Methodist Episcopal general conference meeting at Baltimore in 1824 was that of lay representation in the annual and general conferences. The delegates to the General Conference were chosen chiefly on the basis of their attitude to this reform and under the circumstances the presiding elders of the two Canadian districts (William Case and Henry Ryan) were not appointed. This gave great offence to Ryan who had been a dominant figure in Canadian Methodist affairs. His energies were aroused against the "reformers" and with Captain Breakenridge, a local preacher, he carried on a vigorous agitation against the change. To avoid the dangers of reform, Canadian Methodists were urged to seek separation from the parent church.

¹ Thomas Edward Champion, The Methodist Church in Toronto, p. 49. (Toronto; 1899.)

Conventions were called and these delegated Ryan and Breakenridge to attend the General Conference and urge separation. On arrival, their claims to a seat in the Conference were rejected. The claims for lay representation were considered inexpedient and also rejected; then consideration was given to the demand for a separate Canadian church. The regularly appointed Canadian delegates did not favour separation but advocated concessions in view of the excited condition of certain of the circuits. Finally, it was agreed that there should be a separate conference in Upper Canada, under the supervision of the American bishops. The pride rather than the principles of Ryan having been injured, such action could not be deemed satisfactory so he now urged separation from the American church without permission and during the summer of 1824 the societies were greatly perturbed by the controversy. Only the tactful ministration of Bishops George and Hedding in the province restored calm. At the first Canadian Conference meeting in August 1824 it was clear that the agitation and the anti-American spirit had born fruit and that there was a general desire for separation to take place no later than the time of the succeeding General Conference in 1828. To pave the way for a change the Canadian Conference prepared a memorial to be forwarded to the various annual conferences. This pointed out that (1) the prejudices of the early settlers who had been compelled to leave their homes in the American colonies at the time of the revolution, because of their devotion to the British government, had been revived and intensified by the unjust war of 1812, but that these prejudices would subside if the preachers became permanent residents of the country. (2) The difficulties in the way of episcopal supervision were so great as to be almost insurmountable, resulting in many inconveniences to the Canadian Societies. (3) Jealousies had been awakened in political circles because a number of

Methodist ministers in Upper Canada were from the United States and the circumstances were used to the detriment of the Canadian church. (4) In the event of another war between the two countries, the difficulties of intercourse would make it impracticable for the bishops to discharge their duties in Canada. (5) Under the present circumstances Methodist preachers were not permitted to solemnize matrimony nor could titles to chapel property be secured.¹ It is clear that four of the five reasons for separation had a political bearing.

SCHISM AND POLITICS

Ryan was relieved of his office as Presiding Elder and sent as an itinerant to a newly-created charge. The following year he was superannuated. The altered status, i.e. a separate Canadian Conference, did not change the attitude of the embittered Ryan who insisted that the American church would never grant independence to the Canadian Conference. He then sought to create a schism by organizing a new connection called the "Canadian Wesleyan Methodist Church." In this undertaking he received slight encouragement, for but one preacher and less than two hundred members of the Methodist Episcopal church followed Ryan.² More significant, however, and presaging coming events, was the support the new enterprise received from sources that could have little interest in its spiritual success. Ryan not only attacked the characters of the ministers and the good sense and judgment of the laity of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada but impugned their loyalty. This last attack gave excuse for support from high political quarters for ostensibly there was now a loyal Methodism in opposition to a disloyal. "Even the speaker of the House of Assembly--

¹ Alexander Sutherland, Methodism in Canada, pp. 161-62. (London: Chas. H. Kelly, 1903).

² Ibid. pp. 164-65.

encouraged and followed Ryan and the 'Hon. and Rev.' Dr. Strachan assisted the expenses of the division party by sending him a present of £50."¹ The attempts to destroy by means of divisions, later used so effectively, were already beginning, and loyalty was ever the excuse for such action.

A CANADIAN METHODISM

The approach of the General Conference of 1828 saw an increasing determination on the part of the Canadians to obtain separation from the parent church. Not only had American affiliation been an excuse for schism in 1827 but in 1825 Dr. Strachan, high in Anglican and political circles, had preached a sermon which aroused Egerton Ryerson to the defense of his denomination. This action committed Methodism to a quarter of a century of arduous political combat. Already the counter attacks were under way and Methodists were maligned on the basis of their supposed lack of loyalty and as the dupes of foreign bishops. Strangely enough the same forces pampered the Roman Catholics, with their foreign affiliations.²

The General Conference of 1828 met in Pittsburg. As this was the first time that body had gathered west of the Alleghanies there was a suggestion of the influence of the expanding frontier operating in Methodist life. Much consideration was given to the Canadian request for separation. At first the conference felt that it had no right to allow the church to disintegrate, but rather was it its duty to preserve its integrity. Only when it was stressed that those ministers serving in Canada were not sent but had volunteered and that the relationship between the sections of

¹ Geo. F. Playter, The History of Methodism in Canada, p. 298. (Toronto: 1862). In 1833 and 1834 \$666 and \$338 respectively were voted to Ryan's cause by parliament, stimulated by influences inimical to Methodism. Egerton Ryerson, Story of My Life, pp. 385-86. (Toronto: 1883.)

² The government made substantial grants to Catholic church.

the church in Canada and the United States was voluntary, was it felt that it was possible for the church to withdraw from Canada, ministrations which were no longer acceptable. With much regret in many quarters was the separation noted. The American church had given itself with a fine abandon to the service of the Canadian settlers and the spirit of love and respect had risen superior even to the hatred of war. There had probably also been a sentimental bond of union in the hearts of some men like Bishop Asbury who never forgot their English ancestry and felt in visiting Canada there was something of home. Political exigencies and the new spirit of nationalism in Canada following the war made the separation inevitable.

AGGRESSIVE METHODISM

The appearance of Methodism in the political arena was a matter of surprise and of remarkable importance to the Methodists themselves. The Church of England, accustomed to consider itself the established church of Upper Canada, claimed the entire Clergy Reserve land. These Clergy Reserves constituted one of the most acute problems in the early history of the province. The Constitutional Act of 1791 provided that a quantity of land equal in value to the seventh part of the land granted, be set apart for the support and maintenance of a Protestant Clergy. Authority was vested in the Provincial Parliaments to vary or repeal the provisions concerning a "Protestant Clergy", an ambiguous term. The Provincial Parliament might, therefore, at any time remove the source of trouble, but the two houses could never agree. These lands being scattered among those granted to individuals, impeded the progress of the country. For thirty-six years no Clergy Reserve land was sold, but rather was leased. As the income from the land was so slight, there was little question concerning it

raised at first by any denomination. In 1819 a Presbyterian congregation at Niagara, accustomed to state support in Scotland, requested £100 from the government to pay its minister. This precipitated the question as to the financial claims of different denominations. Lord Bathurst submitted the question to the law offices of the Crown in England who ruled that Presbyterians as well as Anglicans were eligible to share in the proceeds of the Reserves; they also found that the Governor might endow any parsonage or rectory with all the lands appropriated in that township or parish. The Governor, however, did not act on the ruling and grant the Presbyterians their request. In 1819, through the intervention of Dr. Mountain, Anglican Bishop of Quebec, a Clergy Corporation was set up in each section of the province to administer the lands and turn over all proceeds to the receiver-general. As the Clergy Corporation was Anglican, it gave to this denomination a sense of possession.

Up to 1824 the struggle was between two denominations to obtain the property. Two years later Presbyterians and Catholics were receiving government grants and this was soon extended to the Wesleyan Methodists, suggesting the ultimate interest of other denominations in the distribution of the Reserve lands. Meanwhile the lower house of parliament was expressing the popular opinion by various acts, each more drastic till that of 1828 provided that the whole proceeds of the Clergy Reserves should be applied to specific secular purposes. These acts were, of course, killed by the Upper House.¹ This was the situation at the time of the appearance of the Methodists in the political arena.

The Reserves produced little revenue up to that time and the Church of England needing further funds for its activities,

¹ Chas. Lindsay, The Present Position of the Clergy Reserves. (Toronto: 1851).

made application for increased help to the British Parliament and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Such an appeal was really involved in the sermon of Archdeacon Strachan of York delivered July 3, 1825, on the death of Bishop Mountain of Quebec. The sermon was printed and made available to the public in the spring of 1826 and was then felt by many to cast aspersions upon several religious groups, particularly the Methodists whose ministers were referred to as "uneducated itinerant preachers, who leaving their usual employment, betake themselves to preaching the gospel out of idleness..." Methodists had borne all such attacks in the past, in silence but there now appeared a champion in the person of Egerton Ryerson, a young man of twenty-three, the junior preacher on the Yonge Street and York circuit. Ryerson replied anonymously in a pamphlet entitled "A Review of a Sermon Preached by the Hon. and Rev. John Strachan D.D. at York Upper Canada, Third of July, 1825, on the Death of the Late Bishop of Quebec."

"This 'Review' produced a sensation and alarm scarcely less than that of a Fenian invasion; it was the first publication put forth by the Methodists in Upper Canada in their own defense and in which the exclusive claims of the Church of England to an ordained ministry and to the status and endowments of the Established Church were called in question, and the claims of other denominations to equal rights and privileges with the Church of England were defended and maintained; it was the sole topic of conversation and the subject of universal excitement in town and country."¹ From this time forth Strachan and Ryerson faced one another as the champions of different systems. Religiously both were converts to the faith they then held and each possessed the zeal of the convert. Strachan, a Scottish Presbyterian school teacher, entered the Church

¹ Egerton Ryerson, Canadian Methodism, p. 143. (Toronto: 1882).

of England ministry the year in which Egerton Ryerson was born, and through his long ministry was the dominant Anglican clergyman and administrator of Upper Canada. An uncompromising high churchman he believed implicitly in the priestly authority of his church.¹ It seemed to him that Scotland owed her moral superiority to the Established Church and the parochial schools under churchly direction.² It was but logical that he should endeavour to establish in Upper Canada similar agencies for good. But Strachan was politically minded and his activities at times brought dismay or disgust to his followers.³ Though the son of an Aberdeenshire quarryman he turned instinctively to the aristocratic party, represented the creed of the high Toryism of the day and ever clung to these first principles. Under his leadership and with the patronage of such men as Chief Justice Robinson, the Church of England which they considered as established was a chief bulwark against the supposed dangers of democracy.

Opposing Strachan was Ryerson of Loyalist Anglican stock but a convert to Methodism. So hazardous was it to oppose the governmental party that the elder Ryerson, hearing that his son was the probable author of the "Review" of Strachan's sermon is reported to have exclaimed passionately, "My God, we are all ruined!" Ryerson himself remarks, "Those who opposed the dominant party at the time were sure to be singled out for personal attack. They were also made to feel the chilling effect of social exclu-

¹ Ryerson said there was a large and growing branch of the Established Church in England which he venerated, admired and loved, but there was a semi-popish branch of it for which he had no respect and that was the branch which, with a few exceptions existed in the Province. Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 291.

² Ibid. pp. 213 and 215.

³ W. A. Langton, Early Days in Upper Canada. Letters of John Langton, p. 182. (Toronto: 1926.)

siveness. The cry against them was that of ignorance, irreverence, irreligion, republicanism, disloyalty," etc.¹ The young champion proved himself then and in succeeding years a master in the art of controversy, possessing a clear, forceful style, a mastery of detail and a disconcerting ability to controvert the statements of his opponents by reference to documentary evidence. Fortunately, the young man had the advice in this struggle of the wise Elder Case who discreetly remained unseen.² The events of 1826 launched Egerton Ryerson and the Methodist Church upon a strenuous and distinctive career. Methodism in Upper Canada became a political force while Methodism of Lower Canada (Quebec) was so careful to avoid all such entangling alliances that it held up the character examination and severely reprimanded a minister who attended a dinner given an unsuccessful political candidate.³ It is true that at times controversy lessened the spiritual vigor of the denomination but it is also true that Methodism contributed a needed element to the provincial life. Trite remarks may be dangerous but it has been well said that Methodism became the party of liberty and of order. The Tory high church party was that of order without liberty, the Reformers, of liberty without order, while Methodism united the two essentials.

Had Egerton Ryerson foreseen the years of controversy that lay before him he might have hesitated even longer to challenge the dominant party, but he would probably have followed the same course for he never lacked courage. Ryerson had been frequently charged with inconsistency but he was at least consistent in

¹ Egerton Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 98. (Toronto: 1883).

² John Carroll, School of the Prophets, p. 87. (Toronto: 1876).

³ Carroll, Case and His Contemporaries, Vol. IV, p. 353.

generally championing the unpopular cause.¹ Ryerson asserted that he never altered his leading views and principles and he merely seemed to change sides when others abandoned their views.² This is seen to be true in the struggle for "responsible government." As the struggle progressed the content of the term altered, taking on its modern connotation. Ryerson, always something of a Tory at heart, adhered to the earlier interpretation of the words. Time has justified Ryerson as a man of conviction and courage.

STRACHAN'S CHART

Dr. Strachan further aroused the Methodists by a letter and chart, dated May 16, 1827, which he sent to the Colonial Office for the information of Lord Goderich, Secretary of State for the Colonies. This was ordered printed by the British House of Commons and thus became available to the public. The Church of England in Canada was already receiving about \$50,000 annually from the British government and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, but this sum Dr. Strachan desired to see increased. In addition he sought a charter and endowment for a university. To justify his claims he wrote in part, "The teachers of the different denominations with the exception of two ministers of the Church of Scotland, four Congregational ministers...and a respectable English missionary who presides over a Wesleyan Methodist meeting in Kingston are for the most part from the United States where they gather their knowledge and form their sentiments. In-

¹ This was true when in 1826 he sacrificed his friends and sided with those seeking equal rights, true again in 1833 when he deserted the Reformers, in 1837 and 1838 when he defended Bidwell and in 1844 when he championed Metcalf. See Carroll, Past and Present, pp. 295-96. (Toronto: 1860.)

² Be this as it may he was capable of adapting himself to a new situation with an alacrity that was highly disconcerting to his opponents. To the "die-hard" type which clung tenaciously to one set of ideas in spite of the changing times and circumstances, Ryerson often appeared as lacking principle.

deed the Methodist teachers are subject to the orders of the United States of America...and it is manifest that the Colonial government neither had nor can have any other control over them or prevent them from rendering a large portion of the population, by their influence and instructions, hostile to our institutions, civil and religious, than by increasing the number of the Established clergy."¹ This attempt to associate dissenters and disloyalty required no originality for it was an ancient pretext for attack, and yet had small basis in fact. Of the thirty-four effective and six superannuated Methodist ministers listed for the year 1825-6, all but eight had been born and educated in the British dominions and six of the eight had been naturalized.² Of the teachers among dissenters in general in Upper Canada seven-eighths were British born.³ These facts had been called to Strachan's attention in 1826 by Ryerson, yet he persisted in the statement in 1827. That there was surprise in high places as well as low is evident in a letter written to under-secretary Horton by Lord Dalhousie who said "I think it is also important to say that to my own knowledge, the statements of Dr. Strachan are incorrect and erroneous to a degree that utterly astonishes me."⁴

Great excitement swept the province. Some of the Presbyterian clergy hoping that the Church of Scotland might be given equal status with the Church of England as the ecclesiastical establishment of Canada and, therefore, eligible to participate in the Clergy Reserves, did not advocate equal rights for all

¹ Ryerson, Canadian Methodism, p. 167. (Toronto: 1881).

² See Geo. H. Cornish, The Cyclopaedia of Methodism, Vol. 1, p. 31 (Toronto: 1881), and Ryerson, Canadian Methodism, p. 154.

³ Ibid, p. 154.

⁴ Dalhousie Papers, XIV, 351. (Dominion of Canada Archives.)

denominations. Many Presbyterian as well as Baptist laymen, however, united with the Methodists in public assemblies advocating equal rights and privileges for all denominations in Upper Canada, the sale of the Clergy Reserves and the application of the proceeds to education, etc., and opposing the establishing and endowing at the public expense of a university under the sole control of the Church of England.¹ Under the first clause were included the right to solemnize marriage and to hold property. A few years previously the Legislature had authorized Lutheran and Calvinist clergy and ministers of the Church of Scotland to marry any two persons of whom one had been for six months previously to such marriage, a member of the congregation of the officiating clergyman. These showed little inclination to aid the Methodists to obtain a similar status. In the course of the struggle it was the Methodists, nobly supported by some members of other denominations, who became the chief champions of religious and even to a degree civil rights.

The excitement in the province crystallized in public meetings and several petitions were made available for signatures. These petitions, identical in form and addressed to "the Commons of Upper Canada in Provincial Parliament assembled" defended the Methodists and other denominations from the aspersions cast upon them, objected to a university establishment that would infringe upon civil and religious rights and privileges, prayed for preservation from ecclesiastical domination and requested an investigation into the charges made against the various denominations. In response the Legislature appointed an investigating committee which examined some fifty-two persons, chiefly Anglicans. On the basis of the committee's report the House of Assembly by a major-

¹ Ryerson, Canadian Methodism, p. 164.

ity of twenty-one to nine voted "We humbly beg leave to assure your Majesty that the insinuations in the letter (Strachan's) against the Methodist preachers in this Province, do much injustice to a body of pious and deserving men who justly enjoy the confidence and are the spiritual instructors of a large portion of your Majesty's subjects in this province. We are convinced that the tendency of their influence and instruction is not hostile to our institutions."¹ In response to the eighth question asked by the investigating committee as to the ministers of which denomination interfered most in political affairs, the majority thought the Episcopal clergy interfered though several narrowed these activities to Dr. Strachan. Others put the Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist ministers on a par with the Episcopalian.

Thus it appears that Methodism in 1828 was not yet fully launched on the political sea. It had done enough, however, in opposing the exclusive claims and plans of the Church of England to more fully arouse the dominant party which was able to vent its animosity through the Lieutenant Governor. These officials almost invariably fell under the control of their advisers and, therefore, consistently expressed the views of the Family Compact. The Methodist Conference meeting in September, 1831, presented an address to Sir John Colborne expressing the Methodist attitude of opposition to a State church, a university under Anglican control and the exclusive rights of the Church of England to the Clergy Reserves. It further pointed out that the Episcopal claims had been opposed almost every year by a nearly unanimous vote of the Provincial Parliament, not more than four or five members of which at any time belonged to the Methodist church and a great majority

¹ W. and E. Ryerson, Wesleyan Methodist Conference 1840, p. 39. (London: 1840).

belonged to the Episcopal and other churches.¹

The governor replied, "In returning my best thanks to you for your good wishes, I may venture to affirm that the assurance of your desire and determination to promote the interests of pure religion will afford general satisfaction because a very unfavourable impression has been made from one end of the province to the other as regards an imputed secular interference on the part of your preachers..." "...We shall always find a sufficient number of supporters of civil and religious freedom without the interference of the ministers of the gospel. Your ministers, whether they are brought from the United States or any other foreign country will, I hope, experience, while they act honestly and respect British institutions the same protection and encouragement and freedom which all Americans enjoy who have found an asylum among us...." "The system of education which has produced the best and ablest men in the United Kingdom will not be abandoned here to suit the limited views of the leaders of societies who perhaps have neither experience or judgment to appreciate the value or advantage of a liberal education..."² Such venom makes it clear that Methodism was struggling for its existence as a church. Fortunately, the Colonial Office was more liberal in its religious views than the provincial oligarchy. The repeal of the Corporation Act in 1828 supplied a great impetus to religious liberty in England and this was reflected in the Colonial Office. Unfortunately, its attitude was not so decided in the matter of the Clergy Reserves for a dual policy was in reality adopted (1) to authorize the local legislature to reinvest the reserves in the crown, (2) to appease leading denominational groups by making

¹ Egerton Ryerson, The Clergy Reserve Question, p. 38. (Toronto: 1839).

² Christian Guardian, Dec. 21, 1831.

grants from the casual and territorial revenues.¹ The same year (1831) a petition was presented to the House of Assembly requesting the Legislature "to prohibit any exercise of the function of a priest, or exhorter or elder of any denomination in the Province except by British subjects. Second, to prevent any religious society connected with any foreign religious body to assemble in conference, etc." Fortunately the House rejected such partisan action.² Colborne's reply was generally supposed to have been "indited by a violent Episcopal clergyman who was known to be intimate at the Government House."³ Lord Goderich the Colonial Secretary rebuked Colborne for his tactless words. "...Permit me to remark that you have expressed yourself not altogether with that prudence which is necessary on such occasion." After censuring the language applied to the Methodist clergy Lord Goderich continued. "These expressions are calculated to give offence which would better have been avoided, even supposing the censure they imply to have been deserved which I confess, I am not satisfied to have been altogether the case."⁴ Later Sir John deeply regretted the message and said the words were for general and not personal application. He also recommended the incorporation and endowment of Upper Canada Academy (now Victoria University.)

THE CHRISTIAN GUARDIAN

An added reason for opposition to Methodism in certain quarters was the inauguration of a church paper, the Christian

¹ Aileen Dunham, Political Unrest in Upper Canada, p. 94. (London and New York: 1927.)

² Alexander Sutherland, Methodism in Canada, p. 201. (London: 1903.)

³ Christian Guardian, Jan. 22, 1840, p. 50.

⁴ G 69, Colonial Secretary to Colborne 1832. (Dominion of Canada Archives.)

Guardian, in November, 1829. American Methodism had launched the Christian Advocate in 1826 which soon had a wide circulation in the United States and Canada. The latter country, however, had distinctive problems of its own. While the ecclesiastical and educational monopoly which an entrenched oligarchy endeavoured to foist upon the country were not primarily political, they had political roots and soon the Guardian became the voice of public opinion in Upper Canada, chiefly on the side of the "Reformers." Egerton Ryerson, the first editor claimed that battling as he was for denominational liberty and civil rights he should be left with a free hand in the matter of policy which might involve political participation. "This was more necessary as civil and religious freedom were largely identical in those days of undefined prerogatives, irresponsible government and inchoate institutions."¹ As a result he was left with much latitude and reasonable discretion. That political as well as religious liberalism required much championing in the early days was evident from the literature of the period. A correspondent of the Kingston Chronicle, September 10, 1831, wrote, "Many years observation has taught me that the majority of the people are about as competent to provide in a political and governmental way for their future safety and prosperity as a drove of cattle turned into a fine field of grass are calculated to preserve it for their winter's fodder... The labours of St. Egerton are of the same class as those of a redresser of grievances who should go into a farmyard and raise a sedition among the cattle, sheep and hogs... The vast majority of the population know about as much of government as a farmer's cattle do of his system of keeping himself and them alive the year round." This was not an isolated view but that of the High Church party

¹ Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 144.

which controlled the Upper House and the Governor. In opposition to the arguments of Ryerson that the majority were against a church establishment they asserted "that the popular mind is far too unsettled and corrupt to be thus intrusted with the reins of government or the interests of the commonwealth." Legislators were to be guardians rather than hirelings, marked by paternalistic care.¹

WESLEYAN INTERVENTION

Not only did Methodism interfere in political matters and oppose the cherished plans of the oligarchy, but it continued to grow. The twenty-six hundred members of 1816 increased to approximately fifteen thousand by 1832 and for each member there were several adherents. Methodism had rapidly become one of the dominant denominations in Upper Canada. In fact the majority of the witnesses in the parliamentary investigation of 1828, mentioned above, considered the Methodists the most numerous denomination in the province.² Civil disabilities and social ostracism had done little to stop the movement. Different and more subtle methods were to be utilized as the Church of England was about to face an altered financial situation. In 1831 the British government decided to gradually withdraw its grants to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, which maintained the Anglican Clergy in Upper Canada. By 1834 the salaries were completely transferred to the provincial revenues.³ The success of Methodist views would have been a vital blow to the Anglican church which, unlike other denominations depended almost entirely on outside

¹ Anglo-Canadian, The Church and Church Establishment, p. 5ff.

² Ryerson, Canadian Methodism, p. 180.

³ Dunham, Political Unrest in Upper Canada, p. 97.

support.

The strategy invoked was the continuation of the policy used in the case of the schismatic Ryan, the encouragement of opposition in Methodist ranks. In this instance it was the powerful Wesleyan Society of England which was called upon. The Wesleyans had agreed to withdraw from Upper Canada in 1820 but they felt that the separation of the Canadian from the American church had abrogated this agreement and they hoped to re-enter Upper Canada at an early date.¹ Furthermore, the period was one of remarkable development for Wesleyan missions which had then entered the imperialistic stage. Methodism in every British colony with the exception of Upper Canada was at that time under the control of the English body. The influx of British and Irish settlers into the province in the twenties and thirties had aroused again Wesleyan interest in the Colony. In 1831 Peter Jones visited England. He was the first convert from paganism to appear before the Methodist public of the Old Land. He told his story well. English Methodism was impressed and aroused; liberal offers for Indian Missions came in to the Mission offices. The missionary leaders saw a new and promising field and also another appeal to the British public. They also judged the Canadian church to be incapable of the larger task of Indian evangelization, this view being strengthened by Jones' presence and appeal in England.² The Wesleyans stood ready, therefore, to re-enter Upper Canada.

If Methodists must be tolerated these were the most acceptable to the High Church party for theirs was an attitude of

¹ Christian Guardian, Nov. 18, 1840, Alder before Committee, House of Commons, July 1, 1828.

² G.G. Findlay and W.W. Holdsworth, Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, Vol. 1, p. 423. (London: 1921).

subservience to the views of that party for they accepted the Church of England as the Established Church through all the British colonies,¹ and considered themselves as a branch of the Church of England.² The somewhat oligarchic organization of British Methodists kept them out of sympathy with the democratic tendencies of the New World, and they objected to the Canadian opposition to a state church in Canada. But slight reason was required to bring about Wesleyan activity in Upper Canada. Instead there was supplied the most powerful incentive that any church could desire. The spiritual needs of the settlers were urged by the British government which in addition promised financial aid and stressed the patriotic duty of the church to hold Upper Canada for the Empire.³ The Colonial Office acted from patriotic and religious motives for it had at times invited the Wesleyan Missionary Committee to send missionaries with parties of emigrants to South Africa, New South Wales, etc., offering the committee financial assistance for the purpose.⁴

It is clear, however, that the impulse to invite Wesleyan intervention came originally from the Colonial government. Rev. Mr. Alder of the Wesleyans stated before a committee of the British

¹ W. and E. Ryerson, Wesleyan Methodist Conference, 1840, p. 49. See also Colonial Office to Sydenham, G 49, p. 117.

² Christian Guardian, Nov. 18, 1840, Alder before a parliamentary committee.

³ Lord Glenelg wrote April 15, 1836, "In the year 1832 in consequence of representation from various quarters, the Earl of Ripon suggested to the Wesleyan Methodist Society in this country, the extension of their work in Upper Canada." A grant of 900 was made in 1833 on Ripon's order to the Lieutenant Governor. In 1834 this was reduced and in 1835 discontinued on Stanley's order. The Earl of Ripon wrote to Lord Glenelg on April 4, 1836, "It is correctly stated that I had various communications with the Wesleyan Methodist Society upon the subject of their operations in Upper Canada. (Colonial Secretary to Head, 1836, G 77).

⁴ Christian Guardian, May 20, 1835.

house of Commons in 1828, "I believe there are documents in the Colonial Office addressed to Earl Bathurst and Mr. Huskisson from Sir Peregrine Maitland which will show that his excellency is very anxious that the number of British Methodist ministers should be increased as far as possible in Upper Canada and I understand that he wrote home a short time ago recommending that, if possible, pecuniary aid might be allowed us for that purpose.¹ This attempt of 1827 failed² but it has been shown that five years later the appeal was effective. That from the standpoint of British officialdom the move was political as well as religious is abundantly clear. Lord Dalhousie wrote Alder, "It is well known that our frontiers are infested by a class of wandering preachers from the neighbouring states who teach anything but morality or loyalty and thus are doing infinite mischief within His Majesty's territories...in the difficulty the Wesleyan clergy have rendered most valuable services and I think they are qualified and capable to render much greater service under the protection and encouragement which they desire from His Majesty's Government.^{3,4}

¹ No. 108, Report of Select Committee on Religious Grants, Toronto 1836, p. 38, appendix.

² Huskisson considered the giving of financial aid inadvisable but thought the Wesleyan Missionary Society should be impressed with the expediency of providing for the spiritual wants of their brethren in Upper Canada by means of British missionaries instead of having recourse to preachers from the United States. (Colonial Secretary to Maitland, 1827. G 63, part 2, pp. 349-50.)

³ Dalhousie Papers, Vol. XIV, Dalhousie to Alder, July 13, 1837.

⁴ Alder also stressed political and patriotic motives. "In the year 1832 I visited Canada to carry out the wishes of the Imperial and Provincial governments in Upper Canada...This arrangement though not sought by us, yet when it was proposed by the government connected as I have stated with a promise of pecuniary aid, we at once and cordially entered...We could not but approve of a measure which had for its object the spread of true religion in the Province in connection with the diffusion of sound British feeling and an enlightened and finer attachment to British connection. Colonial Office Records, Q 429-2- Alder to Lord John Russell, pp. 271-2.

The commonly accepted view of the day was that Archdeacon Strachan and the Family Compact were responsible for the Lieutenant Governor's suggestions to the Colonial Office and this was supported by the fact that when the Revs. Alder and Hetherington, the British Wesleyan representatives came into Upper Canada, they were allowed to preach in the District School at York which was popularly considered as under Anglican control.¹ No Episcopal Methodist would dream of asking for such privileges at the time, knowing it would be useless. While the imputing of motives is dangerous there seems good reason to accept the view current among early Methodist writers that the invitation to the Wesleyans was purely an attempt on the part of the High Church party to impede or destroy the troublesome activities of the liberty-loving, aggressive and independent Methodist Episcopalians. Yet it is possible that Dr. Strachan may not have been quite so Machiavellian as pictured. Rev. Richard Pope, a British Wesleyan, preached in Cornwall during the year 1817-18. Pope used Wesley's abridgement of the Church of England liturgy and as a result was attractive to the Anglicans of the vicinity. Cornwall was the home of Mrs. Strachan, who on a visit attended Pope's services, was deeply impressed and seemingly had her interests keenly aroused in the views of this Wesleyan preacher. In March 1818 while passing through York Mr. Pope was entertained by Dr. and Mrs. Strachan. It is quite possible that Dr. Strachan may have felt a kindly interest in the Wesleyans because of his wife.²

The Wesleyans were flattered by the invitation of the government and at once proceeded to occupy the province again.

¹ Carroll, School of Prophets, p. 183.
Carroll, Case and His Contemporaries, Vol. III, p. 352.

² Ibid. Vol. II, pp. 209-10.

That their claims to a right to rival another branch of Methodism and invade its territory had some legitimacy is undoubted. The sending of the Indian Peter Jones to England in 1831 to solicit money for Indian missions was a confession of inability on the part of the Methodist Episcopal church to adequately meet the situation. That British Wesleyans would desire the ministrations of their own more highly educated and polished preachers was inevitable and requests for such were forwarded to the Wesleyan Missionary Committee.¹ While there is no reason to believe that the Wesleyans saw the full significance of their invitation to be pawns of the dominant party in their struggle for a religious and educational monopoly, yet they were alive to some of the political elements involved in their coming, feeling their task was to "check and counteract dangerous political designs and tendencies."²

UNION 1833

Canadian Methodism was aghast at the news of the coming of the British Wesleyans. They had accepted the view that Methodism was but one body and had not seriously considered division. They already had some experience of the devastating nature of schism, so vigorous efforts were made to persuade the British Missionary Committee to abandon its plans, but without avail. In 1832 Rev. Robert Alder came to America as the Missionary Committee's representative. He visited the District Meeting in Lower Canada which was under Wesleyan jurisdiction and also communicated his message to the Canadians, the purport of which was that British Wesleyan missionaries would be sent among the British emigrants in the Province. The Canadian Conference Missionary Society acted

¹ Imperial Blue Books pertaining to Canada, Vol. II, p. 293.

² Colonial Office Records, Q 429-2- Alder to Lord John Russell.

quickly and interviewed Alder as to the possibility of avoiding rivalry. He was persuaded to stay in Canada and meet the Canadian conference which assembled August 8, 1832. At this gathering a union or federation was discussed. The ostensible reasons for its consummation were:

1. To silence objectors to Methodism and to defeat factions.
2. To remove possibilities of collision and dispute arising from distinct Methodist societies.
3. To obtain the satisfaction and confidence of British Immigrants from Methodist societies.
4. To bring a greater volume of sentiment and wealth to Methodist institutions and missions.
5. To supply an increase of men and means to advance the work.
6. To bring about an improvement of the ministry by a wider choice of young men.¹

Out of the deliberations and negotiations with England came the "Wesleyan Methodist Church of Canada." The Episcopate which theoretically had continued after 1828 disappeared, and the Canadian church with the new name stood in affiliation with the British Wesleyan Conference. The most significant feature of the agreement dealt with finances whereby "the missions which now or hereafter may be established by this Conference be considered missions of the Wesleyan Missionary Society," the said society appropriating sufficient funds to support the missions.

There were high hopes concerning the union and not the least was that of the authorities that the Christian Guardian would be dissociated from the political schemes and operations it was then supporting,² for under Ryerson the Guardian

¹ See Christian Guardian, August 29, 1832.

² Colonial Office Records 429-2. p. 335.

had become one of the most influential and widely circulated journals in the province and was lending much aid to the Reformers.

RYERSON'S "IMPRESSIONS"

The union of British and Canadian Methodism required the concurrence of the conferences of both parties so Egerton Ryerson went to England in 1833 to carry on the necessary negotiations. He was also entrusted with a petition to the King, signed by some twenty thousand of the citizens of Upper Canada protesting against a dominant church and the attempts to monopolize the Clergy Reserves. (This was not the first time that Methodists had carried such petitions to England. In 1828, the excitement caused by Strachan's letter and chart was so great that the inhabitants of Upper Canada entrusted George Ryerson with a petition signed by eight thousand people. With this he proceeded to England where he was examined by a committee of the House of Commons appointed to consider the civil government of Canada.)

Following Egerton Ryerson's visit to England he was frequently questioned concerning the English situation. In response to what seemed a general interest he published on October 30, 1833 the first part of "Impressions made by my late visit to England." In this he gave an analysis and evaluation of the English political parties, i.e. Tories, Whigs and Radicals. The ultra-Tory he characterized as a lordling in power, a tyrant in politics and a bigot in religion. Representatives of the group were Wellington and Peel. Science and literature, numbers, rank, wealth and tale were embraced in the party which had the support of men of the highest Christian virtue and piety. The moderate Tory professed the same political theory as the ultra but acted from religious principle. To this group belonged a considerable portion of the evangelical clergy and the majority of the Wesleyan Methodists.

It included the great body of the piety, Christian enterprise and sterling virtue of the nation. The Whigs "a name implying a sour and peevish temper" were governed in their attitude to the constitution, etc. by expediency and were, therefore, pliant. Lord John Russell and many dissent-ministers represented this party. Of Radicalism he said, "Radicalism in England appears to me to be but another word for Republicanism...The notorious infidel character of the majority of the political leaders and periodical publications of their party deterred the virtuous part of the nation from associating with them...It is not a little remarkable that that very description of the public press which in England advocates the lowest radicalism, is the foremost in opposing and slandering the Methodists of this province." Hume, one of the radical leaders he pictured as one who had no influence as a religiousman and who had opposed the abolition of colonial slavery, the bill for better Sabbath observance, etc.¹ The references to Hume and the English Radicals were of grave significance as Mackenzie and Papineau, the Reform leaders in Upper and Lower Canada, had made these their confidantes, advisers and representatives in England.

Such words from such a source created dismay and consternation in the ranks of the provincial reformers. The Methodists were considered an important wing of the party. Lord Goderich, the Colonial Secretary spoke of them as "the religious sect upon which he (Mackenzie) leans for support."² The defection of the most powerful Methodist was a disaster of the first order. The Guardian (Dec. 11, 1833) asserted that Ryerson's "Impressions" created a greater uproar in Upper Canada than did the passing of

¹ Ryerson, Story of My Life, pp. 122-24.

² Colonial Secretary to Colborne, G 69, Upper Canada 1832, p. 87.

the Reform Bill in England with all the grievances involved. Ryerson's political observations were meant to be but a preliminary to a longer review of the civil and religious conditions of England. Soon, however, the first sections of the "Impressions" were reprinted or quoted in all the principal journals of the two provinces and in some of the most widely circulated in the United States. Hume had been stressed to give Canadian Methodists a correct view of a man in whom they had reposed much confidence. Ryerson, at a later date said that before going to England he too had been mistaken in Hume, "supposing him to be a dissenter when he was a sceptic, supposing him to be a reformer when he was a republican, supposing him to desire the removal of abuses in the colony when he aimed at its independence."¹

The hesitancy to accept Ryerson's defection was revealed in the British Colonial Argus which spoke of "the astounding news of the political defection of the Guardian--its abandonment of the people's cause and 'going over to the enemy, press, type and all.'" "So totally unprepared were we for such an event that we could hardly believe the evidence of our senses, when on reading the leading article in the Guardian, it appeared but too plain that something was wrong..." The editor proceeded to speak of Egerton Ryerson as the champion of reform, an able advocate of civil and religious liberty whose writings had tended to expose the absurd claims of the English Church to state patronage. It was he who had defeated the machinations of that church, who had fostered and encouraged a spirit of constitutional resistance to colonial misrule and oppression and who had identified himself and the Methodist Church of which he was the official organ, with the cause of reform and liberal measures. Speaking of the cause

¹ Colonial Office Records 382 part I, p. 83.

of the people the editor continued, "He was both the apologist and advocate for years and not only so, but all the preachers in connection with him are publicly known to have been and we believe are still, the warm advocates of colonial reform." The editor then questioned Ryerson's right to transfer the political allegiance of the Guardian and added the significant remarks "and what is to become of Cobourg Seminary which from corner to topstone has been built with the money of reformers? Why, if the people do not assert their injured rights it will all go, Guardian, Seminary and all to the disposal of the Tories, and then farewell to Upper Canada reform forever."

Other editors claimed to see the stultifying effect of union in Ryerson's changed attitude.¹ While it is most probable that Ryerson who had realized that British Methodism was Tory, knew that his changed attitude would be pleasing to the Wesleyans, it is doubtful if this swayed him in his estimates. His contacts with British Radicalism had revealed a party that was opposed to the continuance of the colony with the Motherland and his sturdy loyalty rejected it. He realized that his erstwhile associate, Mackenzie, was tending toward dangerous policies and he wished

¹ The editor of the Cobourg Reformer (Nov. 15, 1833) questioned whether the union had changed the situation to make wrong right and said: "Is Sir John a better governor because he favours union? Is it a crime to meddle with politics now if it formerly was proper? The Methodists are less at a loss to know what course to pursue than what opinion they should form of Mr. Ryerson. They are all taken aback. They are reluctant to admit the full meaning which his "Impressions" would seem to convey... They look on this first fruit of the union with no ordinary suspicion." "Do you think" said one "that Methodists have no fixed principles, that we are to be swayed and disposed by one individual?" The Granville Gazette of Nov. 12 said "Judas was content with thirty pieces of silver and Esau with a mess of pottage but priest Ryerson and the conference through Mr. Marsden must have nine hundred pieces and the promise of a thousand more." The inference was that Ryerson had been bought by the donation of £900 made to the British Wesleyan Missionary Committee by the British government.

Canadians to understand the trend.

RESULTS OF THE "IMPRESSIONS"

The results of the printing of the "Impressions" were many and not the least was the political. The plans of Mackenzie and his friends were hurried and there came hints of that rebellion which materialized four years later. Mackenzie's paper, The Colonial Advocate, of November 23, 1833 remarked that the local authorities had no way to protect themselves against an injured people, that there were not military enough to support a bad government and redcoats were not available from Europe.¹

Among Ryerson's friends there was confusion at what seemed a reversal of attitude. The "Impressions" really revealed a pleased surprise that men and conditions in England were not so bad as pictured and there was little ground for ill-feeling. Many Canadians had been so embittered by the workings of so-called British institutions in Upper Canada that Ryerson's eulogy of what was supposed to be their English counterpart, left them skeptical.² Others were pleased with the possibilities. John Ryerson wrote to Egerton that he was anxious to get the confidence of the government and be entirely disengaged from "that tribe of levellers with whom we have been too intimate and who are at any time ready to turn around and sell us when we fail to please them."³ The church, however, paid the price for Ryerson's convictions. Many Methodists who had for years stood solidly for liberal principles could not alter their views and the grim story is told in a letter from John Ryerson. Left or expelled on the Waterloo circuit, one hundred and fifty; Bay of Quinte, forty; Belleville, forty-seven; Sidney,

¹ Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 130.

² Ibid p. 137.

³ Ibid p. 128.

fifty; Cobourg, thirty-two; total, three hundred and twenty. Received, one hundred and seventy, net loss one hundred and fifty.¹ While the mathematics is not above reproach the figures were significant and similar reports came from other sections of the church. Fortunately for Methodism the tide of opposition was running less violently by December and some subscribers were re-summing their subscriptions to the Guardian.

That Ryerson and the Methodist church which ultimately followed him, were justified in their break with the radical reformers was shown by Hume's famous "baneful domination" letter of March 29, 1834, to Mackenzie.² Official Methodism soon put itself in accord with its leader as appears from the resolution of the Conference of 1834 which expressed unqualified reprobation of Hume's letter, asserted its faith in Egerton Ryerson's integrity and honourable principles and further strongly disclaimed the revolutionary principles expressed in the letter.³

While Methodism was regaining its faith in its leader, the Reformers were unable to forget their betrayal, as they considered it and used every pretext for attack. While the story of the appearance and rise of the Methodist Episcopal Church (a schismatic division from the parent body, the Wesleyan Church,

¹ Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 136.

² "Your triumphant election on the sixteenth and ejection from the Assembly on the seventeenth must hasten that crisis which is fast approaching in the affairs of the Canadas and which will terminate in independence and freedom from the baneful domination of the Mother Country and the tyrannical conduct of a small and despicable faction in the Colony." Of Ryerson he said, "I candidly acknowledge that of all the renegades and apostates from public principle and private honour which during a long course of public life I have known...I never knew a more worthless hypocrite or so base a man as Mr. Ryerson has proved himself to be." Hume was particularly bitter about Ryerson's references to his public and private life. Colonial Office Records, 382, part 1, p. 69ff.

³ Colonial Office Records, Q 382, part 2, p. 454.

about a year and a half after the union of 1833) has no important place in the story of Methodism and politics, yet the reforming politicians saw an opportunity to embarrass the parent church and some became zealous in their support of this new division in the Methodist ranks.

Mackenzie and his friends had still other means of attacking their opponents. Among the committees of the House of Assembly was one on grievances and of this Mr. Mackenzie was chairman. At the close of the session of 1835 the committee presented an elaborate report, the contents of which were not made known to the house. The order to print it was hurried by the reformers through an almost empty Assembly and it proved to be in part their reply to Ryerson's "Impressions." The report dealt at some length with the finances of the Methodists, but unfairly so, for leading Methodists who might have thrown light upon their expenditures were not called upon for evidence. The Methodists, two conferences of which were noted, were branded as ecclesiastical establishments because they accepted governmental support. The report called attention to what seemed like inconsistency in Methodist action as the denomination espoused voluntarism.¹ The Methodists had, of course to distinguish between the British Wesleyans who received the grant for missionary purposes and the Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada which had no claim on the funds. So keenly was the position felt that the Christian Guardian in a supplement, June 24, 1836, dealt with "The Methodist Conference and the Grievance Committee party," the latter being really the more radical reformers. One piece of deception long used by Mackenzie and his friends was to insist that in view of the governmental grant the Methodist clergy were adequately supported and thus had no need

¹ Report of Grievances, 1835, XIV, XV, XVI, p. 13ff.

of the gifts of the denomination. Such groundless statements at times created much embarrassment and even acute hardships among the already under-paid Methodist itinerants.¹ The union with the British Wesleyans had not made Canadian Methodism's path easier for now cross-currents were running which continued to arouse the partisan spirit.

Methodist pulpits were calling for loyalty to the powers-that-be as divinely appointed, much to the disgust of the laymen, while in other cases some excellent men (e.g. James Richardson, later Bishop Richardson of the Methodist Episcopal Church) were leaving the ranks of the ministry impelled by the bitterness of political partisanship. The Christian Guardian was silenced in 1834 by a strong resolution of Conference, opposing political interference on the part of that journal--again the price of union. Egerton Ryerson told the English committee dealing with union that apart from the Clergy Reserve question the Christian Guardian should be non-partisan, its aim being to help men to work out their salvation. This was seemingly the understanding of the British Wesleyan societies concerning the editorial policies.² In return the Methodists received the occasional glances of official favor³ and at times something more tangible for the Colonial Advocate (Feb. 20, 1834) asserted that the Christian Guardian was receiving \$150 for reporting and publishing the speeches of the Assembly. That the attitude of certain of the English Radicals continued to keep Ryerson in alignment with the Tories, was evident in 1836. Hume and Roebuck were the English spokesmen for the radical reformers of Upper and Lower Canada, and made such statements that

¹ Christian Guardian, February 5, 1840.

² See The Christian Guardian, Dec. 4, 1833.

³ Colonial Office Records, Q 382-2- p. 455.

many in England suspected the rapid growth of republicanism in the provinces. Ryerson, a visitor in England in 1836 resented this and felt that one of the most serious impediments to the credit and interests of the Canadas, was their "supposed connection with such a restless political cynic as Mr. Roebuck and such an acknowledged and avowed colonial separationist as Mr. Hume." During the session of 1836 Mr. Ryerson was a visitor to the British House of Commons and was given a seat under the gallery from whence he supplied Lord Sandon and Mr. W.E. Gladstone with much of the material with which they controverted one of Hume's speeches regarding Canada. Mr. Ryerson also wrote a series of letters to the London Times showing that the republican sentiment in Canada was prompted by English radicals.

METHODISTS AND THE ELECTION OF 1836

During Mr. Ryerson's absence in England political difficulties had developed in Upper Canada. Sir Francis Bond Head, stubborn and wholly incapable for his responsible position as Lieutenant Governor precipitated a crisis by his cavalier treatment of his advisers. The Assembly refused to vote supplies, so Sir Francis dissolved the House and ordered an election for June, 1836. The contest was particularly bitter as the Lieutenant Governor, forgetting the dignity of his office went to the hustings as an opponent of the reformers whom he branded as republicans. The contest, made to hinge on loyalty rather than on specific local problems, resulted in the overwhelming victory of the governor's party, the Tories. In the final results, the Methodists were, with the governor, a decisive factor. The letters written by Egerton Ryerson to the Times were not only reprinted and circulated among the members of the British parliament but also reached Canada where, to quote a friend's report to Ryerson, they created the

most amazing effect upon the public mind of the Province of anything he ever wrote.¹ Ryerson had also written concerning a speech in defense of Mackenzie made by Peter Perry, a reforming member of the House of Assembly--and of Methodist stock. This letter Perry's opponents used in the election as a pamphlet under the title "Peter Perry Picked to Pieces by Egerton Ryerson." As a result Perry and in fact all the reforming leaders with one exception, were defeated. Ryerson's correspondence was not produced for the purpose of the election. He was out of the country at the time, but it is clear that the "Moderates" who followed his lead and with whom the majority of the Methodists might be classed had backed the Tory governor. In doing this they helped establish reaction and thus precipitated the tragic events of the following year.² To the Reformers, the Methodists by the Union had sold themselves to the government,³ and the press of the reforming party made much use of the seeming repudiation of voluntaryism by the Conference. The plea was that the preachers who controlled the conference (lay representation not having appeared as yet) had sold themselves to the Tory party, so the local preachers and the laity were urged to repudiate them and remain loyal to their reform principles.⁴ The voting in the recent election, however, revealed that a considerable portion of the Methodists were con-

¹ Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 169.

² The editor of the Christian Guardian in the issue of June 15, 1836, exhorted the Methodists to sanity and defined the issues, one of them being, "whether we shall retain our colonial relations or govern ourselves by elective institutions. In other words shall we abide under British rule or become a republic... This is not fully and openly avowed" but is the logical outcome of the views of those pressing the issue.

³ Colonial Office Records, Q 429-2- Lord to Alder, Sept. 12, 1840.

⁴ See Brockville Recorder, July 22, 1836.

tent to follow the direction of the Conference. Canadian Methodist preachers in 1836 were making a distinction between constitutional and radical reformers. They had by no means lost their old ideals but fearing radicalism they had for the time turned to the party that promised constitutional stability. They disavowed, however, any change in their opposition to a church establishment with special privileges, and continued to urge the disposal of the clergy reserves for educational purposes.¹

The signal victory of the governor and his party caused Mackenzie, in his extremity to turn more definitely to rebellion. He was a political pessimist who considered every abuse to which he turned his attentions a glaring evil. To him a via media was unknown. Mackenzie failed to distinguish between evils and their perpetrators or upholders so he was led to deal in personalities with an invective that was terrible. A sense of proportion and a sense of humour so essential to a public man, he lacked. It was his tendency to espouse the extreme which had alienated Methodism, and now his actions revealed that characteristic, and justified Ryerson's adoption of a conservative course.²

REBELLION

The rebellion of the succeeding year was never dangerous and was confined to the Home and the London Districts. Within a relatively few hours of the receipt of the governor's proclamation throughout the province, loyal volunteers by the thousand were hurrying to the capital. Among them were many half-pay officers who had fought Napoleon. While the settlers saw reasons for dissatisfaction, rebellion was too dangerous a remedy and must be crushed. The forces of radical reform which had recourse to arms

¹ Christian Guardian, August 24, 1836.

² Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 186.

were utterly defeated and discredited but their actions had thrown the shadow of suspicion over all the Reformers, a situation of which the Tory element took a quick advantage. Warfare may unbridle the worst as well as the finest in life, and soon, under the guise of ultra-loyalty, some who had taken up the Tory cause were plundering and mistreating peaceful settlers who had evinced reforming tendencies.¹

The Methodists as a whole wisely hearkened to the words of Egerton Ryerson who, four years previously, had sensed the direction of radical reform. Thus, in succeeding years it was the denomination's proud boast that "the history of Upper Canada does not furnish an instance of a member of the Methodist Church being implicated in rebellion or conspiracy against his sovereign."² So bitter toward Egerton Ryerson were Mackenzie and his associates that he was to be hanged if apprehended.³ Waddilove, a Church of England missionary stated that two-thirds of the prisoners in the London jail (Feb. 19, 1838) were connected with the Universalists. The Quakers of Norwich were suspected, many professed Baptists were in the rebel ranks but as far as he knew no Wesleyan Methodist connected with the British Wesleyans was on the side of rebellion. Though this was the case it would seem, however, that some Methodists were fortunate in not being apprehended. Joseph Hiltz, later a Methodist minister, was persuaded, with his cousin to join the rebels and was dissuaded only at the last moment by his father.⁴ Rev. George Ferguson, preacher on the Prescott and Augusta circuit

¹ Edward Ermatinger, Life of Colonel Thomas Talbot, p. 156. (St. Thomas: 1859).

² W. and E. Ryerson, Wesleyan Methodist Conference, 1840, p. 29.

³ Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 176.

⁴ Hiltz. Experiences of a Backwoods Preacher, p. 22ff. (Toronto: 1885.)

at the time of the rising said, "many were concerned in the Rebellion and even some of the preachers were implicated. I one day met a party of cavalry in pursuit of one of them."¹ Egerton Ryerson pointed out that very many who left the Methodist Church and engaged in the attack on his policies, were active promoters of the rebellion plot, or were ruined in character and in prospects by their relation to it.² In 1834, the year following the publication of the "Impressions" Methodism showed a decrease of one thousand one hundred and nine members. In 1837, the year following the bitter election of 1836, it reported a further loss of five hundred and ninety-one members. It is probable that many ex-Methodist radicals were involved to a greater or lesser extent in the rising--which incidentally reflects no greater dishonour on its immediate instigators and participants than upon its more remote instigators and suppressors.

Unfortunately the events near York (Toronto) in December, 1837, did not end the province's military difficulties. The American border became a source of danger. During 1838-9 bands of filibustering Americans kept crossing the frontier and attacking Canada. The most serious of these raids was at Prescott, where about a hundred raiders established themselves in a stone mill while some hundreds of others tried to join them from the American shore. Similar raids were made along the Detroit River. To meet the attacks made upon Methodist loyalty--for such attacks continued in spite of evident loyalty of the mass of the denomination--the Christian Guardian of Nov. 28, 1838, asked as to what proportion of the Canadian forces engaged at Prescott were Methodist. The Rev. A. Hurlbut replying from Matilda, December 11, 1838, stated

¹ Journal of Rev. George Ferguson, Mss. p. 152. (Victoria College Library.)

² Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 178.

that he had examined the rolls of three companies from Matilda township who were at Prescott at the time of the battle and found two of the three captains, two lieutenants and ~~twenty-one men~~, Methodist, fifty-one men of Methodist connection, and more inclined to Methodism than anything else. Matilda township was filled with the descendants of "Yankee Episcopal Methodism," but Prescott refuted all charges of disloyalty.¹

TORY REACTION

The period following the rebellion was one of the most trying in the political history of Upper Canada. A dominant oligarchy flushed by the success of a revolt crushed and foreign attacks repelled, seeing its political opposition discredited and prostrate, sought to work its will upon the country. Reform was branded as traitorous and in desperation, forward-looking men migrated in alarming numbers to the United States. The British Wesleyan element in the Canadian church following the Tory lead, expressed an almost hysterical loyalty. Rev. William Harvard, the president of the Canadian conference, (appointed by the English) issued a pastoral on April 17, 1838, urging the ministers of the Methodist church to refuse membership in the society to those whose loyalty might be doubted. "...No man who is not disposed to be a good subject can be admissable to the sacraments of the church... etc., etc." Some of the Canadian societies were greatly aroused and one on the Prescott and Augusta circuit agreed that if questions as to their loyalty were asked, they would leave the place.² Fortunately Egerton Ryerson intervened and brought a measure of peace by asserting through the Christian Guardian that "none of the various political opinions which men hold and their respect-

¹ See Christian Guardian, Dec. 19, 1838.

² Journal of Rev. George Ferguson, Mss. p. 152-3.

ful and constitutional expression of them, is any just cause of excluding from the Lord's Table, any human being, provided his religious character is unexceptional."

Events moved rapidly. John Ryerson in writing to Egerton in March, 1838, said that while it was a blessing that Mackenzie and radicalism were down, there was imminent danger of being brought under a military and High Church oligarchy which was worse.¹ Men already foresaw a bitter struggle and were desiring Egerton Ryerson to resume again the control of the Christian Guardian in order to protect Methodism and the people. On his assumption of the editorship Ryerson stated his policy. As a British subject and a Christian he could not be neutral. He was opposed to the introduction of new and untried theories of government. He assumed that the country was to remain in the Empire. In civil matters he took his stand on the established constitution of the country.² The Clergy Reserves, he felt should be converted for educational purposes.³ Soon he was courageous enough to condemn the lax policy of Head which had made the recent rebellion possible as well as condemn those who had participated in it.⁴

In its position in 1838 Methodism politically was an Ishmael. Cursed fervently by the reforming party which traced its disasters in large part to it, Methodism was also hated by the governmental party for it remained the most effective barrier to its cherished plans including the establishing and endowing of the Church of England in Upper Canada. When it is considered that

¹ Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 200.

² See The Christian Guardian, July 11, 1838.

³ Joseph Edward Sanderson, The First Century of Methodism in Canada, Vol. II, p. 15. (Toronto: 1908-10).

⁴ Christian Guardian, August 1, 1838.

it was the Canadian and not the English preachers who constituted the opposition to the plans of the Family Compact, the difficulties and the significance of the Ryersons who constituted the head and heart of the movement, may be realized. All memories of the service rendered by Egerton in exposing Hume and Roebuck, of the services of Methodists in the election of 1836, disappeared. It is significant that the Conference of 1838 appointed a "committee for the protection of our civil and religious privileges," and that Ryerson asserted the same year that the governmental party had sanctioned and at length identified itself with a causeless and wicked crusade of extermination against the Methodist connection.¹ The new governor, Sir George Arthur, to quiet matters, issued a proclamation condemning an established church and the taxing of others to support it. But the popular fear was not allayed as it was the matter of endowment (the fate of the Clergy Reserves) which aroused people.

CANADIAN VS ENGLISH METHODISM

That indefatigable chronicler of things Methodist--Carroll believed that at this point and out of these circumstances, there was born an antagonism between the Canadian leaders of the conference, and those representing the British authorities, which led to the disruption of 1840. Egerton Ryerson's letter neutralizing the super-loyal stand of Harvard called forth the antipathy of the British Wesleyan element.² The second incident arousing irritation was another act of Egerton Ryerson, the defense of the Hon. Marshall S. Bidwell. Bidwell was a prominent lawyer and leader among the Reformers. Lord Glenelg had ordered Sir Francis Bond Head to appoint him a judge on the first opportunity but this Head refused.

¹ Christian Guardian, Nov. 7, 1838.

² Carroll, Case and His Contemporaries, Vol. IV, p. 179.

At the time of the rebellion there was an attempt to implicate Bidwell, but no incriminating evidence could be produced. Head, however, in an interview with Bidwell and posing as a friend, advised him to leave the country, which advice Bidwell accepted. The subterfuge of the governor made it possible for him to point to the flight of one whom an English Whig ministry would make a judge. It also eliminated an influential reformer. Head later inspired an editorial in the "Patriot" stating that Bidwell's flight revealed a consciousness of guilt and urged the erasing of his name from the rolls of the Law Society.¹ Egerton Ryerson appeared as the champion of the maligned Bidwell. He was one of the few prominent men in Upper Canada who could defend a suspected rebel, for Mackenzie's threat to hang him as soon as captured made his loyalty undoubted. Ryerson issued two letters, the first signed "a United Empire Loyalist," the second over his own signature. In these he demolished the arguments concerning Bidwell's guilt. The letters had a marked effect on the public mind, revived the confidence of the friends of liberal constitutional government and actually were instrumental in halting the emigration of prominent but discouraged liberals.² Many of the English Methodists could see Ryerson's generous act, however, merely as a piece of political interference. At the next conference his character was assailed but his friends vindicated it and asserted their confidence by electing him as editor of the Christian Guardian. It was the second step in the developing breach between English and Canadians. There is little doubt that the Colonial government was able to transmit its views to the London Missionary Committee, which, it was hoped would use its influence to suppress free dis-

¹ Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 191.

² Ibid, p. 192-3.

cussion and the spirit of discontent among Canadian Methodists. The reassertion of the desire for civil and ecclesiastical equality in the country was proving inimical to the plans of the Tory High Church party.

Unfortunately the committee sympathised with the government and objected to the Christian Guardian's free discussion of governmental matters. Rev. Robert Alder came again to Upper Canada in 1839, this time to repress agitation, silence the political voice of the Christian Guardian and bring Canadian Methodism into closer harmony with the English branch which accepted the Church of England as the established church in the Empire. A meeting was arranged at York at which the English representative met the Ryersons and a few others. While some Canadians for the sake of peace were willing to yield to the English demands, the Ryersons valiantly asserted their rights, refused to be throttled or recognise any supposed verbal agreements or understandings as to policies, and stood by the printed articles of Union. The sharp differences of opinion became public when a letter from the Missionary Committee to the Lieutenant Governor found its way into a provincial paper. The letter was so pro-governmental that public opinion swung in favor of the Christian Guardian and the Canadian element in the conference. The latter revealed its liberal tendency in 1839 by electing Egerton Ryerson as its secretary, though under Alder's influence it disclaimed any intention of interfering in merely party politics.¹ Before returning to England Alder held several interviews with the Lieutenant Governor and his advisers, accepted their viewpoint and on his return implanted it in the minds of his English colleagues.² Unable to silence Canadian

¹ Carroll, Case and His Cotemporaries, Vol. IV, pp. 238-245.

² Ibid, p. 248.

Methodism or break its opposition to an established church the English Missionary Committee, without informing the Canadians, determined to dissolve the Union. This information was transmitted to the governor by the English representatives as early as January 2, 1840.¹

The political adventurings of English Methodism in Upper Canada had achieved little but disaster and heart burning. Methodism in Upper Canada, because of its struggles against the political and social disabilities thrust upon it, was inevitably liberal in its tendencies and this the English interpreted as radical and republican. English Wesleyanism was soundly Tory.² It opposed the efforts of a Whig ministry in England to settle the affairs in Canada following the rebellion and had urged Egerton Ryerson to oppose Lord Sydenham's efforts to unite the two Canadas and settle

¹ Sanderson, The First Century of Methodism in Canada, Vol. II, p. 16.

See also the Colonial Office Records, Q 429.2, p. 291.

² "It is an indisputable fact that the British Methodist Conference had been for some years past in a great measure a political association, not that that body has outwardly and avowedly assumed a political character; its leaders are too sagacious not to perceive that such an exhibition would have excited alarm in many of the supporters of Methodism... But there may be the exercise of political influence and inculcation of political theories, the maintenance of one set of political doctrines and the discouragement of another where there is outwardly neutrality or even indifference... Now so it is the case of the Methodist Conference,...

What then are Methodist politics? The answer is brief. They are Tory. Their 'organs' are all of the conservative school. Their ministers are Tories, and good services they have rendered to many a Tory candidate at parliamentary elections." Christian Guardian, Nov. 25, 1840, copies from the (London, Eng.) Patriot of Oct. 8, 1840. The British Wesleyan Conference wrote the Canadians urging loyalty to the king and scriptural obedience to his government, "the very same authority by which we hold the ministerial office has instituted the civil power... The same spirit of insubordination which would abolish the wholesome restraint of the magistrate would banish from the world the institutions of Christianity itself." Minutes of Conference, 1837, pp. 178-9.

the Clergy Reserves question.¹ This, Ryerson refused to do but rather co-operated with Sydenham.² English Wesleyanism possessed in large measure the English desire to dominate and it could not appreciate or understand the spirit of freedom and independence in a colony.³ Furthermore, their willingness to accept an established church created an obvious barrier between themselves and the Canadians.

Egerton Ryerson, shortly after the arrival of the new governor general, Mr. Poulett Thompson (later Lord Sydenham) in Upper Canada, addressed a letter to him in which he designated the Clergy Reserve question as the parent of all social discord in the province. He also stated that the elevation of any one party or group to a position of pre-eminence entailed a means of support. "Hence, on the one side a selfish, insolent, baseless ecclesiastical and political oligarchy and on the other side an abused, an injured and dissatisfied country."⁴ Egerton Ryerson also found that there was an attempt to transfer the government grants to the British Wesleyan Missionary Committee from the Casual and Territorial Revenues, to the Clergy Reserves funds. The Canadian Conference felt that it had no claims to the former funds and no immediate interest in the government's method of expending it, but it did feel involved in the latter fund for as a Canadian Protestant Church it considered that it had certain vested rights. Any sums given to the British Wesleyans would be

¹ There was a certain advantage in political adherence. The governor gave orders that advertising was to be transferred from the Patriot to the Christian Guardian. Christian Guardian, Feb. 26, 1840.

² Canada Duplicate Dispatches, 1843-7, no. 57. Ryerson to the governor general.

³ Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 107.

⁴ Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 260.

charged against the Methodist share if a division were made and thus they would lose to the Wesleyan Missionary Committee. Obviously there was strong opposition. Again Egerton Ryerson interviewed the governor concerning a grant to Upper Canada Academy. The governor spoke of the funds already being received by the Methodists. Ryerson explained the peculiarity of the situation whereby it was the British Wesleyan Committee receiving the grant. The governor following investigations of his own advocated the transferring of the grant from the British to the Canadian Methodists.¹

SEPARATION AND RIVALRY

The activity of Ryerson was considered by the English body--really the London Missionary Committee, for the English conference was little involved--as a usurpation by a Canadian of the right of the British president of the Conference, to deal with the government. Clearly there was an important economic difference appearing between the two branches of Methodism but much of the difference was in reality political at bottom arising from their sharply divergent views. Stinson, the English president of the Canadian Conference in 1838, with the secretary, issued a letter to the church in which he was revealed as opposed to a dominant ecclesiastical establishment² but by 1840 the influence of the Missionary Committee had been sufficient to cause him to reverse his attitude. At the Conference of 1840 the English Committee made serious charges, i.e.,

1. Egerton Ryerson had practically superseded the president, Rev. Joseph Stinson, in communicating with the governor general.

¹ Colonial Secretary to Sydenham, 1840, p. 32ff

² Christian Guardian, Nov. 21, 1838.

2. He had showed a want of integrity in attempting to gain possession of the grant made by the Crown to the Wesleyan Missionary Committee.

3. The Christian Guardian had become more and more a party organ. The Committee demanded that Egerton Ryerson be repudiated by the Canadian Conference, that the Christian Guardian, if continued at all, 'be exclusively a religious paper and stated that if these demands were not met, they would recommend a dissolution of the Union.¹ The Canadians felt that to submit to such demands would destroy their independent action on public questions, and they, therefore, declined. A delegation including Egerton Ryerson, the storm centre, was sent to England but was never given an adequate hearing before the whole Conference. The English Conference acted on the recommendation of the Missionary Committee so the Union was dissolved by the withdrawal of the British partners.

In Upper Canada the problems of Methodism were increased by the break. Eleven preachers adhered to the British Committee and this number was increased to fifteen at the Conference of 1841. The Canadians had no missionary fund, their society having been but an auxiliary of the British Missionary Society. The British Committee adequately supplied with men and money vigorously pushed its activities in the province and dissention was increased. In the further struggle for religious equality and the settlement of the Reserve question, the British Methodists must be classed as enemies. Yet in the darkness the Canadians saw rays of hope. The church rallied wonderfully to the missionary appeal and immediately following the break there was a period of great revivals and more converts were won than during the previous seven years of Union.²

¹ Sutherland, Methodism in Canada, p. 243.

² Christian Guardian, March 24, 1841.

During the period following the dissolution of the Union, Canadian Methodism made a conscious effort to avoid what it considered political party entanglements. The Conference of 1845 resolved to continue its position of neutrality in politics, which attitude it considered both safe and honourable. The pastoral letter commended the members of the Methodist Church for the way in which they had guarded against a secular, party spirit in the period of unrest recently prevailing.

While officially Methodism might avoid those entanglements that had led to so many difficulties, it was impossible for tumultuous Egerton Ryerson to avoid the political arena. Furthermore, there was real significance in the current statements that Ryerson was the pope of Methodism.¹ While he was not empowered to speak "ex-cathedra" in 1844, his prestige and his controversial ability gave him an ascendancy over many Methodists and in fact over much of the popular mind of the province. While official Methodism was asserting its neutrality, the doughty Ryerson was again entering the lists.

RYERSON'S DEFENSE OF METCALFE

The Clergy Reserves continued a vexed problem of the provincial political life, but back of that lay responsible government, for irresponsible government was the stronghold of privilege and had impeded the solution of the reserve question. Anything affecting executive responsibility was a matter of primary importance in the province and the question came to the fore under Sir Charles Metcalfe. The term "responsible government" as used scarcely a century ago is difficult to understand as its content altered rapidly with the progress of political thought. The Grievance Committee appointed in 1835 used the term "a responsible

¹ Langton, Early Days in Upper Canada, p. 255.

government" but their meaning was indefinite, as they vaguely advocated the Executive's "responsibility to public opinion," but failed to supply details as to method. A meeting of York citizens on March 25, 1836, in comparing the Canadian with the British constitution spoke of the king being assisted in the affairs of government by the advice of known and responsible councillors and officers who possessed the confidence of the people.¹ Again there was lack of definition. A new definition of responsible government developed in 1843 when a break appeared between the governor, Sir Charles Metcalfe and his reforming advisers. The difference arose over the appointing of a minor official, a clerk of the peace. Previously the Reformers had objected to all offices in the gift of the crown being given to one party, which obviously was not their party. Seemingly, they desired but a fair distribution of patronage. In 1843, however, when in power their attitude changed. They insisted that they as the party in power must have the entire confidence of the governor which included the proviso that he must bestow the governmental patronage upon their political followers. Party appointment to office was thus an essential part of responsible government. Metcalfe refused to be a mere tool in the hands of his council and asserted that patronage should be "distributed to reward merit, to meet just claims, and to promote the efficiency of the public service." While willing to consult his ministers, the governor felt the final decision must be his. The ministry resigned upon the issue which was clearly whether the governor or the party was to rule the province. Unable to get a ministry together, the governor ruled with but two of three assistants for a period of nine months. Finally, an

¹ Christian Guardian, March 30, 1836

appeal was made to the country.

The elements that would call forth the bitterest partisan feelings were imminent in the struggle and a prudent churchman would have considered intervention as folly, particularly as no moral issue was involved, but Egerton Ryerson was not the prudent churchman. To the vast surprise and uneasiness of many in the province he appeared as the champion and defender of the governor. His own statement was that as he had done so much to establish responsible government in the country and was morally largely responsible for it, it was his duty to intervene when responsible government was misapplied. To him patronage was no mere party prize but a prerogative of the crown and an infringement of that was a blow at the liberty of the subject.¹ Ryerson's first reaction had been to support the reforming councillors but soon his conservative tendencies asserted themselves,² and in coming to the support of the governor he became engaged in one of the bitterest struggles of his career. There were many characteristics about Metcalfe to attract Ryerson. He was of excellent morals and manifested a fine spirit of charity, but chiefly he embodied an ideal.

¹ Ryerson, Story of My Life, pp. 319-20.

² Ryerson was not advanced in his constitutional views and was quite satisfied with the act of 1791. See Colonial Office Records, Q 379. part 3, p. 519, Ryerson to under secretary Hay. In 1839 Egerton Ryerson opposed a bill sponsored by Lord John Russell and desired the continuance of the Act of 1791 as more conservative and more British. See the Reply of the Canadian Wesleyan Conference, London, 1841, p. 98. It is true that on the death of Sydenham, Ryerson wrote, "At the foundation of these (troubles) lay the hitherto defective theory and worse than defective system of Colonial government, a system destitute of the safety valve of responsibility, of the attributes of freedom and of the essential materials of executive power, a system that was despotic from its weakness, and arbitrary from its pretences to representation, a system inefficient in the hands of good men." Christian Guardian, Sept. 29, 1841, p. 194. The more conservative statements of Egerton Ryerson are, however, more consistent with his constitutional views.

As the representative of the crown, he was--or should be--impartial, and appointments to office by such a man were preferable to those made by parties. Our various attempts to establish non-partisan commissions reveal the persistence of the ideal. There still lingered certain conceptions of power resting in the hands of the sovereign and this the governor represented.

To impute further motives for Mr. Ryerson's actions would be to tread on less solid ground but there is some reason to believe that such motives existed. In 1841, the governor of the day, Lord Sydenham, had discussed with Mr. Ryerson the office of Superintendent of Education for the Province and had made verbal promises as to the office which he expected his successor, Sir John Bagot, to fulfill.¹ This was not done. In fact no Methodist had opportunity for political preferment at the time. Mr. Ryerson was not interested in the position merely as an economic and political haven but as an opportunity for increasing the well-being of the rising generation. That his interests were deep and sincere is evidenced by his heroic labours for Victoria College in its darkest days and by his struggles with the Conference at a later date, to secure the recognition of the rights of children in the church. If Egerton Ryerson harbored ambitions concerning the superintendency of education, he had every right to, on unselfish grounds for he probably was, and knew he was, the best qualified person available for the position. That the matter had been considered and discussed in the Ryerson family is evident from a letter written by John in which he said Egerton was better fitted for the position of Superintendent of Education than anyone in the province and he could there render his best service to the church and country. He further remarked, however, concerning the approaching election,

¹ Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 303.

that if the Baldwin ministry were returned to power "the stool will be knocked from under you."¹ The office was not a political reward but would be impossible for Egerton Ryerson to obtain unless the governor general's power were in the ascendancy. From Lord Sydenham's standpoint it would not be a mere political payment as he had already expressed his desire to have Egerton Ryerson take some part in the intellectual improvement of the country.² Had Ryerson, therefore, certain ulterior motives in coming to the governor general's aid--as was generally asserted by his enemies--they sprang from a desire to serve his country more widely, and a hotly-contested election was a legitimate means to such an end.

Again the storm broke over Methodism, or rather in its midst. The invective of the reforming editorial writers was terrific. Such terms as "Holy St. Egerton," "reverend loafers," "the arch-apostate St. Egerton," "a bold bad man capable of committing any action to further his own views," were freely used.³ Methodist laymen of reforming tendencies felt keenly the participation of their leading clergyman on the Tory side. A meeting of the local preachers, leaders, stewards and exhorters of the Toronto city station, was convened and objected strenuously to Ryerson's political interference, to his signing himself "Reverend" and to his use of the columns of the Christian Guardian.⁴ Other less influential societies were expressing the same sentiments and a furor was aroused throughout the church. The Conference of 1844, meeting at Brockville would take no official action to support or reprimand Ryerson but resolved that "while we disclaim all intention of controlling the political sentiments of any of our ministers or members

¹ Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 346.

² Ibid., p. 345.

³ See British Whig (Kingston) May 21 and 31, 1844.

⁴ Brockville Recorder, July 18, 1844.

so long as those sentiments do not contravene the Discipline of our church, nor contradict the word of God, we will not as a body be responsible for the political doctrines of any member, or members of our Conference or church or party in our country but leave our people perfectly free to exercise their own judgment in political and civil affairs."¹ It was generally felt that while professing neutrality the older and leading clergy were supporting Ryerson. The party was represented by the Book Committee, really a powerful inner group in the Conference. Many younger preachers and laymen espoused the reforming cause. A split was appearing between the laity and the leading clergy, who, it was suggested in the newspaper correspondence, were bought by the governor's party by hints of four or five thousand pounds for Victoria College and by a share in the Clergy Reserves.

The election resulted in the victory of the governor, suggesting that Ryerson and the senior clergy had exerted considerable influence on the popular mind. The controversy in the church, however, did not immediately subside. Egerton Ryerson stated to Lord Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, that Methodism "has for many years possessed and still does possess the casting vote between contending political parties."² The statement was widely published and the implication added that the party giving most might have the Methodist support.³ Naturally, many Methodists resented the slur and sought to remove opportunity for such a stigma. As a result and out of the election bitterness there appeared a new monthly magazine, the "Toronto Periodical Journal" or "Wesleyan Methodist" having much anti-Ryerson Methodist support

¹ Brockville Recorder, June 27, 1844.

² Ryerson, Story of My Life, p. 328.

³ Examiner, Toronto, Jan. 8, 1845.

in and about Toronto. It opposed political preachers and urged lay representation in conference, this being considered a check on the political activities of the clergy. Thus a new democratic note was appearing. While short-lived the "Journal" and its party had a lasting influence on Toronto Methodism. During the year 1846-7 many Toronto Methodists, unsettled by the propaganda, left the Wesleyans and invited a New Connection minister to be their pastor. This branch of the church being highly democratic had already espoused lay representation. In Bowmanville the disaffected party invited the Primitive Methodists to organize among them. Thus the local political differences were aiding the advance of rival Methodist organizations appearing in the province at the time from England.¹

METHODIST WITHDRAWAL FROM POLITICS

In 1844 Egerton Ryerson was appointed assistant superintendent of Education for Canada West. Soon the title became that of Chief Superintendent of Education. The Christian Guardian hailed it as a recognition of equal rights in the province and hoped that it was but the beginning of the manifestation of equal privilege. "The Church" the organ of the Church of England, regarded the appointment as an "impolitic and heartless step" and threatened that the Anglicans would not sit quietly beneath the wrong. Thus slowly was religious equality recognised in the Province. The appointment removed Egerton Ryerson from the political arena and never again was Methodism involved so directly in political affairs. The memories of 1844 faded but slowly, however. The Radicals could neither forget nor forgive and for several years

¹ See Carroll, Case and His Contemporaries, Vol. IV, pp. 434-5 and 484.

espoused little differences that would embarrass the church.¹ These conditions affected the membership for in both 1845 and 1846 substantial decreases were reported. Such losses arising from political participation had been noted from time to time by Rev. John Carroll and Rev. James Evans the latter of whom had adhered to the British Conference.² Comparison was made with Wesleyanism in Lower Canada which sedulously avoided all semblance of political activity and continued to prosper. Upper Canadian Methodism was but realizing something of the social aspect and application of religion which played such an important part in its later career. True there were mistaken judgments but chiefly was it paying the price for its courageous stand.

Of course, the charges of political partizanship were not readily dropped. In 1847 the Methodists were violently charged with political favoritism for supporting the government measure dealing with the provincial university. Methodism with its heavy investment in Victoria College was vitally interested in higher education but asserted that it would not intervene in purely political issues. Despite these statements the Methodists who took part in the consideration of the university issue, were vigorously attacked by their opponents for political bias. By the middle of the century an altered situation made political participation less necessary. By 1848 the Methodists in the Province were estimated to number one hundred and thirty-seven thousand ranking next to the Anglicans who claimed one hundred and sixty-six thousand

¹ Globe, Toronto, July 3, 1849.

² For an uncomplimentary view of Canadian Methodism from the standpoint of a British Wesleyan see James Evans to Ephriam Evans, Michipicoten, Feb. 9, 1839, unpublished manuscript, University of Western Ontario. In speaking of the Christian Guardian he said; "It is a vulgar, backbiting, misrepresenting, slanderous publication... There are many articles which descend below the dignity that should be maintained in the official organ of the Conference."

members and adherents.¹ Economically and numerically the followers of Wesley were no longer negligible but were commanding a new respect. The following year the old Toryism of Upper Canada died. The rioting and violence associated with the compensation of the rebellion losses in Lower Canada so discredited the ultra-Tories that the more moderate members of the group joined the moderates of the other party and Methodism's great social and political enemy disappeared. About the same time Newman and Manning in England were deserting the National church for the Roman Catholic and the High Church party in Canada which the Methodists had consistently charged with "Puseyism" felt the reaction which swept through the Protestant world. Again the claims of Methodism seemed justified and their enemies discomfited. Struggle for recognition and rights were no longer necessary. It was even becoming impossible.

While the hero theory of history may be discarded, it is true that powerful men are needed to dominate the imaginations and thoughts of large masses of people. With the retirement of Egerton Ryerson from the political arena Methodism lost that type of leadership, her great minds being directed toward other interests. An equally potent reason for decreasing political participation was the division in the Methodist ranks, with the predilections typical of each group. The British Wesleyans were usually highly conservative in politics. The Primitive Methodists, in a sense a reaction from the former, tended to be political radicals. The Methodist Episcopalians had found their greatest support from the same party, while the members of the Canada Conference and also of the New Connection societies were dividing their allegiance between the parties then developing in Canada.

¹ Christian Guardian, April 4, 1849.

Doctrinally, Methodism was a unity, but social, economic and political interests could not be denied. No one could completely weld the diverse segments. Methodist leaders in the new period were stressing the moral rather than political implications of partisan action. The Pastoral address of 1860 contained a careful exhortation to the ministers to remember in whatever course they took they were servants of Christ. They were to give support to no man unless there was a reasonable guarantee that he feared God and hated covetousness. Sabbath breaking and legalized and protected sources of misery and crime were hinted at and the clergy urged to stand for the things that were pure, patriotic and humane.

That even under the changed conditions Methodism had not entirely lost its political potency is evidenced by a letter written by that shrewd political leader, Sir John Macdonald to Sir Richard Cartwright. Defending the appointment of Sir Francis Hincks as minister of finance, Macdonald pointed out that the appointment had had the effect of bringing Aikens into the government. "The adhesions of Aikens is of great strength to Hincks and to us. He is an Irish Protestant and the representative layman of the whole Wesleyan-Methodist community who look up to him as their political leader. With him in the cabinet the friends of the government may then confidently rely upon getting the Methodist support at the next general elections, which, as you know, is of no little consequence in anything like a close struggle of parties."¹

METHODIST UNION

There remains one more major political movement that was associated more or less closely chronologically with a similar movement in Methodism; that was the Confederation of the Canadian Provinces in 1867 and the Methodist Union Movement instituted at

¹ Macdonald Papers. Letter dated Ottawa, Nov. 17, 1869. (Dominion of Canada Archives.)

about the same time. The situation in the Canadas was critical in the early sixties. Though it was estimated that forty thousand Canadians served in the northern armies during the Civil War, there was an increasing tension between Great Britain and the United States due to what were considered as unfriendly acts on the part of the former. Some American papers hinted that with the cessation of hostilities Canada would feel the force of American anger. As Canadians had unpleasant memories of several American attacks during the previous half-century there was a real incentive to think in terms of a unified Canada to meet such a threat. Furthermore, the series of deadlocks in the parliament of Upper and Lower Canada made effective government impossible. Out of the succeeding negotiations came Confederation.

At the time that the problems of union were agitating the political mind they were also stimulating ecclesiastical thinking. In part the latter was influenced sympathetically by the former, in part there were very practical reasons for a union of the Methodist bodies, now wastefully numerous. While professing identical doctrines, the Wesleyan, Episcopal, Primitive, New Connection and Bible Christian Methodists were all engaged in a vigorous rivalry. In 1851 the town of Newcastle with five hundred inhabitants possessed six churches, three of which were Methodist.¹ Such division favoured unrest for a common threat of a discontented group was that a preacher of another branch of Methodism would be sent for and the society thus broken.² As has been noted, such were not idle threats. That the desire for unity was abroad in the seventh decade of the century is evident. The Civil War was a struggle to frustrate the centrifugal force. At the beginning of the decade

¹ John Squair, Darlington and Clark, p. 59. (Toronto:1927).

² Carroll, Past and Present, p. 114.

(1861) the United Presbyterians and the Free churchmen unified their forces in Upper and Lower Canada, and this was but a prelude to a wider Presbyterian union fourteen years later. In 1866 and again in 1870 the Wesleyan Conference in Canada expressed itself as being convinced of the desirability and importance of a union of all Methodist bodies in Canada. That the hope was not merely local was evident from a statement made by the distinguished Morley Punshon in the spring of 1867 while still in England. In it he expressed his willingness to come to Canada "if I can aid in the establishment of a grand Methodist confederacy which shall be one of the great spiritual powers in the New World."¹ Active negotiations were undertaken among the churches in 1870. The Wesleyan Conference of 1871 suggested certain basic principles for the United Methodist Church. One was a general Conference meeting quadrennially and empowered to legislate for the entire church. Another principle was the admission of laymen to such a general conference if it should prove to be the wish of the denomination as expressed through the quarterly meetings. The Wesleyans also resolved to negotiate with the Methodists of Eastern British America with a view to uniting them with their brethren in Ontario, and Quebec. The results were so satisfactory that the negotiating committee was able to recommend to the conference of 1872 that immediate steps be taken for the consummation of a federal union with the Methodists of Eastern British America.

Other negotiations in Ontario were not, however, so successful and by the end of 1871 only the Wesleyan Methodists and the New Connections remained actively interested in union. By 1873 these two churches had adopted practically the same basis of union as that agreed upon by the Wesleyans and Eastern Methodists so the

¹ Sutherland, Methodism in Canada, p. 317-8.

wider union became possible and this was consummated in September, 1874, the Wesleyan Methodists, the new Connections and the Methodists of Eastern British America forming the Methodist Church of Canada. As this union affected the relation of the Canadian churches to the parent bodies in England, negotiations had been entered into with them and their consent to such a union obtained.¹ Following the events of 1874 the Methodist Church of Canada became a thoroughly autonomous member of the Methodist family.

The results of the union were highly satisfactory. During its first quadrennium the growth of the united church was in excess of twenty thousand members. Union seemed justified. Then came other events and new situations. The North-West territories purchased by the Canadian government in 1868 were being opened and a great policy of expansion was facing the churches of the east. The evident success of the partial union of 1874 caused men's minds to turn again to the follies of division, for the chief rivalry was between the larger bodies as the Methodist church and the Methodist Episcopal Church. Then the great Oecumenical Conference of 1881, held in London impressed men with the fundamental unity of Methodism. By 1882 the rising tide could no longer be ignored particularly as the demand was coming from the masses of the laymen. Strangely the major opposition to this wider union came from among the ministers of the Methodist church. On the other hand the clergy of the Methodist Episcopal Church favored the move, possibly being influenced by the better economic conditions of the larger body. The struggle in opposition to the proposal, centred in the annual conferences to which laymen had not as yet been admitted. In one of these it lost, in another it barely won, but gradually the tide turned and the project was endorsed. As a result this

¹ Sutherland, Methodism in Canada, pp. 320-327.

all-inclusive Methodist Union was completed in 1883 just a half century after the first major step in that direction, the federation of the Canadian Conference and the British Wesleyans.

The relation to the political process of centralization under way at the time is not necessarily very close. There were immediate and urgent practical reasons for union present in the case of both church and state, yet these practical reasons were of a widely dissimilar type. The relation between the two movements is in time, and in the same type of general urge driving men to seek stability and prosperity in the wider union.

